

June 6, 2006
Sarah Scranton, Executive Director

House Health Policy Committee

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan opposes passage of HB 5311, which would create a new section in Michigan law that prohibits the nonprescription dispensing of emergency contraception.

As the nation's largest and most trusted voluntary reproductive health care organization, Planned Parenthood believes that emergency contraception (EC) is an essential component of comprehensive health care and should be easily accessible to all women, including those who have experienced contraceptive failure, those who have had unprotected intercourse, and those who have been sexually assaulted. Increasing access to EC improves the chances that women will be able to use it when they face a crisis.

Emergency contraception is just that—contraception—which allows women to avoid unintended pregnancies and also reduces the need for abortion. Emergency contraception functions in the same way as ordinary birth control pills and cannot interrupt an established pregnancy. Emergency contraception does not cause an abortion—it *prevents* pregnancy. Medical research indicates that EC can significantly reduce the risk of pregnancy if used within 5 days of unprotected sex, but that the sooner emergency contraception is administered, the better the chance of preventing an unintended pregnancy. Studies indicate that widespread use and availability could prevent as many as 1.7 million unintended pregnancies in the U.S. each year, including as many as 800,000 that now end in abortion.

Plan B[®], the progestin-only emergency contraceptive product that was being considered for over-the-counter (OTC) status by the FDA, is safe, effective, easy to use, and has no harmful long-term side effects. The FDA's own independent experts verified the safety, efficacy and importance of Plan B[®].

At a joint hearing of independent medical experts, from both the FDA Nonprescription Drugs and Reproductive Health Drugs Advisory Committees, experts voted 23 to 4 to recommend that the FDA make EC available over-the-counter. Committee members carefully weighted the strong scientific evidence supporting Plan B[®] and the proven public health benefits of OTC access for women. These experts firmly rejected placing any limitations on the availability of Plan B[®] in an OTC setting and underscored that the declining rate of efficacy for Plan B[®] over time makes it all the more important to facilitate access to this backup method. In addition to this group of experts, more than 70 of the nation's leading medical and public health organizations—including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Society for Adolescent Medicine and the American Public Health Association—all support unrestricted over-the-counter access to emergency contraception.

Despite the overwhelming consensus from the independent medical and scientific review process, the FDA continues to delay its decision to grant OTC status to Plan B[®]. We hope we can count on the Michigan Legislature to not make the same decision, but instead help increase access to this important contraceptive option to improve women's health.

It is clearly obvious that we all want to decrease the number of unintended pregnancies and the need for abortion. Increasing access and availability of emergency contraception would do just that. By advancing this bill, we are truly losing an opportunity to work together toward commonsense and common ground policies.

On behalf of Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan, I urge you to oppose this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.



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